

PUBLIC NOTICE

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has negotiated an annual funding agreement with the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (Council) whereby the Council would perform some of the Service's activities on the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge during 2004-2005. The proposal is now available for a 45-day public review prior to its planned signing. A copy can be viewed at <http://alaska.fws.gov/current.htm>.

Under the agreement the staff of the Council would work closely with the staff of the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge. The Council would perform the following activities in 2004: 1) locating and marking public easements across private lands within the refuge boundary; 2) assisting with environmental education and outreach in local villages; 3) wildlife harvest monitoring; 4) moose population surveys; and 5) maintenance of Government property on or near Fort Yukon. These are not different activities from those currently performed routinely by refuge employees. The agreement would be funded at \$59,000.

The Service views this annual funding agreement as a mechanism to engage local residents in refuge management activities, increase the efficiency of refuge programs, and foster a closer relationship between refuge employees and local residents, including tribal members. After signing, the agreement would be reviewed by Congress during a 90 day period before it becomes effective. This tentative agreement conforms to provisions of Public Law 93-638, Section 403(c) (the Indian Self-determination and Education Assistance Act), 16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act), and other applicable laws and regulations.

The Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge is the third largest of more than 540 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The refuge was established in 1980 and includes more than 8.5 million acres of wetlands and boreal forest habitat along 300 miles of the Yukon River, north of Fairbanks. It is internationally noted for its abundance of migratory birds.

Individuals who are interested in additional information on this tentative annual funding agreement may view the draft agreement at <http://alaska.fws.gov/current.htm>) or contact the Refuge Manager, Ted Heuer, at 907-456-0440, email ted_heuer@fws.gov, or write to Refuge Manager, Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, 101 12th Avenue, Room 264, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701. Anyone interested in commenting on this proposed action may do so at the addresses above. Public comments will be accepted through March 29, 45 days from the publication of this notice.